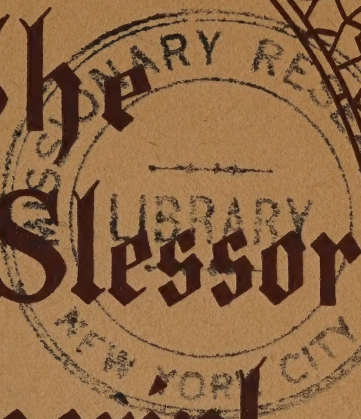


P2711
Biog

Slessor, Mary Mitchell, 1848-1915 ³⁷⁵



The Mary Slessor Memorial Window.

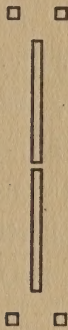
Descriptive Notes
and a
Short Biography
by

T. M. DAVIDSON, M.A., B.Sc.

Mary Slessor
Memorial



The Mary Slessor Memorial Window



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1924

The Mary Slessor Memorial Window,
designed by Mr Wm. Aikman, 7
Camden Square, London, was erected
in the Natural History Museum,
Victoria Art Galleries, Dundee, on
28th September, 1923.

The Mary Slessor Memorial Window.

Many designs for the Memorial Window were submitted to the Committee. All were beautiful, and of great artistic worth, and the Committee found it a somewhat difficult task to make a final choice. The Committee were led to choose the design which, in their opinion, made the most direct appeal to the factory workers of the city, the class to which Mary Slessor belonged ; and also to the children of the city, with whom the movement began ; as well as a design, which, in artistic merit, would satisfy the cultured expert.

The design submitted by Mr Wm. Aikman, London, was awarded the premier place. It was evident to the Committee that Mr Aikman had absorbed Mary Slessor's Biography from cover to cover ; and, by pictorial representation, had reproduced the atmosphere of Mary Slessor's life at home and in the Foreign Mission Field ; while symbolism had been given its due place as part of the design.

Of the two principal subjects the left-hand one shows Mary Slessor as a young woman at her work in the factory. Here the girl at the loom is not only weaving a fabric, but weaving her thoughts into dreams, little thinking that one day her dreams would be realised, and that the name of "Mary Slessor" would be known wherever the English language was spoken.

The subject on the right-hand illustrates Mary Slessor surrounded by some of the twin children whom she had saved from death ; while in the back-ground are some of the mothers—now restored to the respect of their

tribe, instead of being hounded, as formerly, into the jungle.

Below are four smaller pictures :—

(1). Mary Slessor is seen holding a horde of savage warriors at bay. They are on their way to murder the wives and slaves of the chief's son who had died. Mary Slessor's arguments brought them to reason, "her audacity awed them," and thus a cruel custom was abolished by the amazing courage of this little woman.

(2). The second of the smaller pictures show the chief Edem kneeling at Mary Slessor's feet, and thanking her for her love and courage. She is seen pointing upwards, as if revealing the source of her power.

(3). The third picture shows Mary Slessor dispensing her first "communion" in Okoyong, assisted by the Rev. W. T. Weir of Creek Town. A description of this touching scene is given in Mr Livingstone's biography of Mary Slessor : "When the 103rd Psalm was sung in Efik to the tune of Stroudwater tears stood in her eyes as she thought of the greatness of God's love."

(4). The fourth picture shows Mary Slessor at the seat of justice. Here, after many years, the Dundee factory girl is seen discharging the duties of a British Consular Agent in one of the outposts of the British Empire.

Sixteen small pictures form the borders of the left and right-hand portions of the windows respectively ; these illustrate, in sequence, various incidents in Mary Slessor's life. In the left-hand portion are depicted the outstanding events in her home life—from her work in the Dundee Cowgate Mission to her first glimpse of the African shore. In the right-hand portion the incidents refer to her life in the African jungle. Each picture has an explanatory title, but the incidents depicted can best be understood by reference to Mary Slessor's biography.

The pictorial representation of Mary Slessor's life is so arresting that the symbolic portions of the Window

may be overlooked ; these are worthy of attention, not only as an artistic ornamentation, but as emblems of Mary Slessor's faith and works. Underneath the principal subject in the left-hand light a pelican—a mystic emblem of Christ—is succouring her young with blood taken from its own breast ; and corresponding to this in the right-hand light there are symbols of faith and suffering in the Cross and the crown of Thorns.

There are interesting groups in the upper portions of the respective lights ; on the left-hand is a seated female figure with one child in her arms and the other kneeling at her feet—emblematic of the "Love" that "suffereth long and is kind." On the right is the seated figure of Christ in the attitude of blessing ; on the scroll underneath are written the words "Between the sower and the reaper stands the husbandman."

The Burning Bush and the Dove as the Messenger, in allusion to the Home Church and Foreign Mission of the United Free Church of Scotland, to which Mary Slessor was attached, are inserted in the tracery piece at the top of the window.

Two separate subjects are inserted in circles at the base of the window. On the left-hand is a Map showing the area of Mary Slessor's activities, and the field penetrated by the pioneer as she carried the lamp of knowledge, salvation, and healing, into "the regions beyond." On the right-hand is inserted the Cross of the Order of St John of Jerusalem presented to Mary Slessor by King George V.

The Window bears the following inscription :—

"ERECTED BY THE MANY ADMIRING FRIENDS
TO THE GLORY OF GOD AND IN MEMORY OF
MARY SLESSOR—DUNDEE FACTORY GIRL,
PIONEER MISSIONARY OLD CALABAR, WHITE
QUEEN OF OKOYONG, AND MEMBER OF THE
ORDER OF ST JOHN OF JERUSALEM. B. 1848 :
D. 1915."

MARY SLESSOR.

(From "The Evening Telegraph," 27th September, 1923).

The life of Mary Slessor will go down the ages as a great African epic. Her biography now in the sixteenth thousand, has been translated into French, Dutch, Norwegian, and Chinese languages, and her name is known to-day wherever the English language is spoken. That a Dundee factory girl should end her days as a Consular Agent in one of the outposts of the British Empire, where she "blazed the trail," has been a revelation to many outwith missionary circles. Like another great missionary, Mary Slessor was "in perils oft"; and the story of her amazing fearlessness in the face of danger and of threatening death, her wonderful achievements in breaking up the cruel customs and superstitions of heathenism, in rescuing twins from death, and restoring their mothers to the respect of their own tribe—work accomplished alone by one little solitary white woman in the West African jungles—have touched the heart of Christian people everywhere. The appreciation of her life-work has been well summed up in the words of a theological Professor—"Had Mary Slessor been a Roman Catholic she would have been canonised; or had she been an Episcopalian she would have been buried in Westminster Abbey."

Hooligans in the Cowgate.

The wonderful achievements of Mary Slessor did not come as a surprise to those who knew her among the hooligans in the Cowgate Mission, Dundee. A fellow-worker with her there recalls the following incident:—One evening in the Mission the leader of the "Cowgate Gang" blew his whistle; the children stood up, and, at his command, marched out of the hall to the popular song, "Jog along and persevere." The door of the Mission Hall was battered with stones and bottles, and the teachers were afraid to venture out until the

policeman came his rounds. Unobserved, Mary Slessor reached the door, and, turning the key, she went out while the stones were flying ; she escaped injury, and such was the effect of her personality that she led the children back into the hall. Afterwards, when remonstrated with by the superintendent, she calmly replied—"Where duty calls me, my safety is God's business."

"The All-Night Journey."

Such faith led her to do wonderful things. Amongst the many adventures told in her biography the story of "The All-Night Journey" is typical. After an outburst of fighting at Ekenge a number of women were herded into a stockade, and men were proceeding to murder them. Mary Slessor heard of it and hurried to the scene. She got inside the stockade and held the armed men at bay. All day and night she stood in a tornado of rain, her fearlessness awing the savage mind. Next night at midnight a little voice was heard outside the stockade, "Ma, the baby is dying, and the milk is done." What a quandary ! Without milk from Old Calabar the baby would die, and to desert her post would mean that the women would be murdered. To reach Calabar and return before the dawn seemed an impossible task. "Where duty calls me, my safety is God's business." She stole out of the stockade, and, with a guide, entered the leopard-infested jungle. She walked all night in a drenching rain, reached Creek Town at four o'clock in the morning, secured milk and dry clothes, and returned to the stockade ere the day dawned. When the sleepy guard looked towards the enclosure the dauntless Mary Slessor was looking at them with a secret joy in her heart. Her courage broke the stubbornness of the men, the women were released, and the baby's life was saved. Such is one of the many wonderful stories recorded in Mr Livingstone's biography of the great missionary.

Scottish Heroine.

To-day Scotland realises that Mary Slessor is one of her greatest heroines ; and the City of Dundee, regarding

her as one of her most esteemed citizens, has crowned an effort, begun by the children of the city, to commemorate her life by means of a stained-glass window in the Albert Institute Museum, and to carry on her work by means of a Scholarship. Every class in the community has contributed to the Fund; the merchant's silver and the children's pennies are in the Memorial. No life-story has so touched the hearts of the children of Scotland since the death of David Livingstone.

Her Life in Brief.

Her life may be summarised as follows :—

Mary Slessor was born in Gilcomston, a suburb of Aberdeen, on 2nd December, 1848.

The family came to Dundee in 1859, and Mary Slessor began work as a half-timer in Baxter's Factory. She became associated with Wishart U.P. Church, under Dr J. C. Baxter, and wrought in the Cowgate Mission, afterwards associating herself with Victoria U.P. Church.

Her education as a half-timer was meagre, but she was a great reader, and acquired a wonderful culture through her study of the Bible, Carlyle, and Emerson.

On 5th August, 1876, she left Liverpool for Old Calabar. After twelve years at the Mission Base she went alone into the Okoyong district amongst cruel cannibal tribes.

After the conquest of Okoyong, she went further inland; and her work from 1902-1910 has been entitled "The Romance of Enyong Creek."

At the age of sixty-two the "regions beyond" still called her—onward, ever onward, deeper into the jungle until the frail body succumbed at Itu on 13th January, 1915.

Her body was brought to Duke Town, her coffin wrapped in the Union Jack, and she was laid to rest, while Government officials, merchants, missionaries, and African chiefs paid homage to the great pioneer.

Mary Slessor Scholarship.

Of the £1000 collected towards the Memorial, £450 was utilised for the Memorial Window, leaving a balance of £550. As the training of a Missionary for one year costs £70, the interest available can only assist a candidate for the Mission Field, it will not be sufficient to cover a year's training. The Committee hopes that by donations and legacies from all interested in mission work they may be able, in the not far distant future, to grant yearly the entire sum required.

Mr W. W. Halley, Treasurer of the Committee, 41 Reform Street, Dundee, will receive and acknowledge donations towards the Scholarship.

Mr W. W. HALLEY,

Treasurer to the Committee,

Mary Slessor Memorial,

41 Reform Street, Dundee.

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Enclosed find

being Donation to the Fund for the

Mary Slessor Scholarship.

Name

Address

MCCORQUODALE

